1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramacca



84 It appeared that nothing in a woman's life was so dreaded
85 as childbearing, nothing more coveted than fertility, and no time so difficult and so anxious as when a woman was rearing her children.

787 "The day before a girl marries she prays all day to her
584 gods," said Dida, who with Fenekonde and several other women had joined us. "I begged my god Kesekia and gave him rice and rum. All day they played the agida. I begged
[842] him not to hate my husband. I begged him to give us children."

843 When a woman conceived, her husband made her many
[831] obias, and especially a black sack obia with four cowries
751 sewed on it, to keep her safe on the paths which led from
789 village to village, and from village to her field. The fear of the power of bad magic at this time was so great that, if we but looked at one of the pregnant women, or let our eyes rest on the several obias she wore, she grew nervous, covered them with both her hands, and disappeared in fear that the very power of our glance might weaken the potency of the charms. She did not believe in the white man's magic, but she was not in a condition to wish to put it to a test.

844 "When her time comes, a woman sees to it that she is in
782 her own village," said Fenekonde. "It is not good to give birth in the bush, or on the river."

This had almost happened to Wilhelmina with her last child. She was on the river alone in a boat. Chief Sungi of Dahomey met her and called on his gods to delay the coming of the child until he brought her home. He had strong obia, and so the misfortune was averted.

When the woman felt the first labor-pains, she prayed to the gods, and to her personal spirits. On the great Sky God she called, and the Earth Mother; on her ak'a, her soul; on the Yorka, the ancestors; and then she prayed to her personal gods, and particularly to whatever snake gods she might have, for some of these were known to be jealous of a coming child. But none of the gods dared be slighted.